

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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METANOEO - PROBLEM PASSAGES

It is taken for granted that the reader of this study has already considered what has been said in leaflets that have preceded it (Issues No. **SB106** and **SB107**). In declaring that the words *submit*, *yield* and *ease* will honestly translate every occurrence of *metanoeo* and enlighten the passages in which this word is found, certain problems are created in some verses which are easily solved once they are carefully considered.

It is now being declared by many that the word *metanoeo* means "turn ye." This idea has received much acceleration due to its incorporation into *The Living Bible*, a rewriting of God's Word which presents Ken Taylor's concept of what the Bible says. "Turn from your sins, and turn to God," is Taylor's concept of the ideas contained in *metanoeo*. And even though this is very good advice, it bears no resemblance to what John and the Lord Jesus said.

If Jesus had meant "turn from your sins and turn to God," the word he would have used is *epistrepho*, a word of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and the word *Theos* (God) would also have been used. If in Matthew 4:17 Jesus Christ had meant to say "turn ye" or "reverse yourself," he would have used the word *epistrepho*, or, maybe *strepho*. *Strepho* means to move around so as to face in a different direction, and it is used both literally (John 20:14) and figuratively (Acts 7:39) in the New Testament.

The words *metanoeo* and *epistrepho* are both found in Acts 3:19: "**Submit (metanoeo) ye therefore and be turned about (epistrepho), that your sins may be blotted out.**" The appearance of these two words in the same sentence caused Ken Taylor to come up with a different meaning for *metanoeo* and translate it: "Now change your mind and attitude to God and turn to Him" (*The Living Bible*).

The paragraph above prompts me to say that if anyone is going to build positive Biblical theology and present it as God's truth, whether as a teacher of a Bible class or a pastor in the pulpit, he had better not base it upon the declarations made in *The Living Bible*; at least not until he has checked them out and found that they bear some

resemblance to the original Greek, which is seldom the case in Ken Taylor's Version.

If *metanoeo* means "turn about," then we would not find Paul using both *metanoeo* and *epistrepho* in Acts 26:20. There he declares that he had proclaimed to the Gentiles: "**That they should submit (*metanoeo*) and turn (*epistrepho*) to God, and do work worthy of submission.**" We can rest assured that Paul was not repeating himself when he used two distinct words here.

A passage such as Luke 17:3,4 could give difficulty unless we keep in mind that these words were spoken by the Lord to His twelve special disciples, men who had the apostolic position out of Him. They were authorized to sit in judgment in disputes among other disciples, also in regard to any offence that was committed against them personally. This was an authority that could easily be abused. Their position as the Lord's apostles, the powers that accompanied their positions, and their future expectations made them targets for many snares, accusations, and slanders. They were warned that these could come, and they were instructed as to what action to take. "**Take heed to yourselves. If your brother should be sinning (against you), rebuke him; and if he yields, forgive him. And if he should ever be sinning against you seven times a day, and if he should ever be turning about (*epistrepho*) seven times in a day saying, I submit, thou shalt forgive him.**" (Luke 17:3,4).

Our Lord was here laying down judicial principles to guide these men who were destined to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is not strange at all when the apostles heard this they immediately said: "**Lord, increase our faith,**" which meant, "**Lord give us greater ability to take Thee at Thy word and act accordingly.**"

We have no right to rebuke any sinner, and neither can our forgiveness of him be made to depend upon him submitting to our rebuke. Luke 17: 1-4 was truth for the apostles. We can learn from it but must not appropriate it for ourselves. Submission to all who rule under God will be the duty of all when God governs the earth.

In Acts 8:22 we come upon the first passage where *metanoeo* is related to wickedness. The favorite phrase of the "hot gospel" preachers, "Repent of your sins!" is not to be found anywhere in the Word of God. This phrase has started many out on a useless effort since "repentance," no matter how you define it, will not cleanse a man of the least of his sins. It is as ineffectual as the water with which Pilate washed his hands. However, submission is certainly the first gate through which one must pass to get to the fount of cleansing, the blood of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Peter did use it in connection with the sin of Simon the sorcerer, and the passage, becomes more complicated due to the usage of *apo* (from). Because of this I would translate this passage: "Ease (unburden) yourself therefore from this evil of yours."

The great burden of guilt which Simon had brought upon himself is seen in the words of Peter when he said: "**You are in the gall of bitterness and a bond of iniquity.**" Nevertheless, in mercy Peter called upon him to ease himself from this great load of guilt (have another mind about it) and beseech the Lord, if, consequently the thought of his heart might be forgiven him. Simon yielded at once, as Acts 8:24 shows.

Another problem that arises is found in 2 Cor. 7:8-10. A more accurate translation will solve this. Here Paul says: "**For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret (*metamelomai*) it. For I perceive that the letter has made you sorry, even if it be for a season. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry to submission (*metanoia*), for you were made sorry according to God, that you may forfeit nothing by us. For sorrow according to God is producing submission unto salvation not to be regretted (*metameloai*), yet the sorrow of this world is producing death.**"

In 2 Cor. 12:20,21 we meet with another problem occasioned by the occurrence of *epi* (on) in this passage. The difficulty persists for all interpreters, no matter how they translate *metanoeo*. I would translate this as follows: "**For I fear, lest perhaps, on coming, I may not be finding you as I want you to be; lest perhaps there be strife, jealousy, angers, factions, vilifications, whisperings, puffings-up, tumults; lest on my coming back my God will be humbling me toward you, and I shall be mourning for many who have been hitherto sinning and have not eased (unburdened) themselves of their uncleanness, and prostitution, and wantonness which they have practiced.**"

The book of Revelation contains twelve occurrences of *metanoeo* and in five of these it is followed by the word **ek**, which means "out" (2:21,22; 9:20,21; 16:11). This has been brought forth as an argument against the use of "submit" as a translation of *metanoeo*. You cannot "submit out" of anything, is the way the objection is stated. However, the difficulty remains no matter how one translates it. And, if idiomatic sense is to be produced here when rendering these passages into English we will need to recognize that the preposition **ek**, which literally means "out of," will have to be translated "from," and that the word "ease" is the best word to use. In view of this I would translate as follows: "**And I gave her time that she should be submitting, but she is not willing to ease (unburden) herself from her fornication**" (Rev. 2:21). "**And the rest of the men who were not killed did not ease (unburden) themselves of the works of their hands. . . Neither did they ease (unburden) themselves of their murders, etc.**" (Rev. 9:20,21). "**And they did not ease (unburden) themselves from their deeds**" (Rev. 16:11).

The value of translating as in the above paragraph will be seen more clearly when we consider the invitation of our Lord in Matt. 11 :28-30: "**Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.**"

This was not a new message. It is the same call to submit that both John and the Lord had proclaimed before. Long before, Isaiah had described the burden of those "**that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope**" (Isa. 5:18). He must have had in mind the weary and sore-shouldered oxen that could be seen on almost any road in his day. He likened sinners to these beasts of burden. Before this he had spoken of a "**sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity**" (Isa. 1 :4). Jehovah asks: "**Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more**" Isa. 1:5). They simply would not submit, they would not lay down their load of sin and guilt.

It was the mind of Job to fear God and to serve Him, and this he did. Satan said that Job did this because the Lord had so richly blessed him, and that his mind would not be the same if this hedge were removed. God allowed Satan to take it away, but Job's mind did not change. His answer was: "**Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil.**" Nothing could change his mind. "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,**" was his triumphant answer. His mind toward God when wealthy and in good health was the same in poverty and sickness. Truly, he had the after-mind.

Submission toward God is an attitude, a way of life, a settled mode of thinking. It is a mind stayed on Jehovah, kept in perfect union with Him, based upon faith and trust in Him. It is having the mind of Christ, who could say: "**The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back**" (Isa. 50:5). Submission is receiving God's word with all readiness of mind (Acts 17:11). It is a constant state, for even if a submissive one fails, he remains submissive, yields to God and knows he is forgiven. Submission is having the mind which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5).

Such a mind is not one that man himself can produce. Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of such a mind. In our dealing with others we may detect its complete absence. At such times the slave of the Lord must not strive and strain to produce an attitude of submission. He must be gentle, apt to teach, in meekness instructing the one who is standing in his own light, and it may well be that if he so acts, God will give the stubborn one submission (*metanoia*) to the acknowledging of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25). Verily, true submission is a gift from God. We are dependent upon Him for that state of mind that will open the doors of salvation.

I do not know who first said: "Let go and let God," but it is a fine piece of advice. It will result in submission. Then we can say: "**My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise**" (Psalm 57:7).

End – Issue No. SB108